

An informal survey of counties, however, indicates that membership in local arts councils is much higher. Even taking into account that locally reported numbers very likely include some artists from outside the county and some non-artists, the numbers are considerably higher than any of the values reported by other sources. Among the 25 counties reporting local membership, 24 had member to resident ratios higher than the state's list—in eight counties, more than double. Filtering membership lists from the Toe River Arts Council representing Mitchell and Yancey counties to include only all county residents in the arts, yielded nearly double the number of working artists and produced ratios of 13 and 10 people earning income from the arts per resident.

Table 16: Counties with more than four artists per 1,000 residents

County	NC Arts Council	Artists per 1000
Swain	144	11.0
Orange	883	7.5
Clay	54	5.7
Mitchell	87	5.5
Yancey	88	4.8
Watauga	196	4.6
Jackson	141	4.0
Transylvania	119	4.0
Buncombe	865	4.0

While arts councils are leading forums for association, local networking goes well beyond the membership organizations. The many pottery guilds across North Carolina, such as the Triangle Potters Guild, offer shared resources for potters plus regular meetings that build social connections, support networks, and informal knowledge exchange. In the Toe River Valley, 25 artists form the Toe River Crafts Cooperative, eight glass blowers in Celo have formed “Glass Studios of the South Toe River Valley” to collectively advertise, market and arrange studio tours. 14 potters in Mitchell County formed a guild to advertise and market called the “Potters of Roan Mountain.”